

**MINUTES**  
**Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission Meeting**  
**Helena Headquarters**  
1420 East 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue - Helena, MT 59620  
**CONFERENCE CALL**  
**July 28, 2006**

**Commission Members Present:** Steve Doherty, Chairman; John Brenden and Tim Mulligan, Vice-Chair and Shane Colton

**Fish, Wildlife & Parks Staff:** Acting Director Sue Daly; Chris Smith, Larry Peterman, Chris Hunter, Bob Lane, and Betty Warren.

Chairman Doherty called the conference call meeting to order at 10:50 a.m.

**1. Chairman Doherty** asked that Chris Hunter, FWP Fisheries Division Administrator, give a description of the closures that FWP is recommending be closed. They are as follows:

FWP is recommending mandatory hoot owl closures (no fishing between noon and midnight) for the following waters, effective on Monday, July 31 until September 15, unless conditions dramatically improve:

**Region 2**

- Lower Bitterroot River from Tucker Crossing (near Victor) to the confluence with the Clark Fork River. This section reached a max of 73F from July 16-18 and maxima have remained above 73F since July 21 to the present. The distance from Tucker to the mouth is roughly 40 miles.

**Region 3**

- Lower Gallatin River from Williams Bridge near the mouth of the canyon downstream to the mouth. This recommendation is based on temperatures in excess of 73 degrees for 3 or more days in the Gallatin.

- East Gallatin (all) - Based on low flows and likely temp (but temperature data has not documented due to lack of thermographs) in the East Gallatin.

- Lower Madison from Ennis Dam downstream to the mouth.

**Region 4**

- Sun River from Gibson Reservoir to the confluence with the Missouri due to high temperatures.
- Dearborn River from the Highway 434 Bridge downstream to the confluence with the Missouri due to high temperatures.
- Smith River - Entire river due to high temperatures.

**Region 5**

- Yellowstone River from the Highway 191 bridge to Huntley Diversion.

Discussion:

- If the Big Hole hits its drought plan triggers, the Commission has already approved closing the Big Hole, so all that would be needed is the Director's approval.
- Mulligan asked Hunter what other fisheries are nearing closure thresholds: Upper Big Hole, Lower Big Hole, Lower Boulder, Stillwater River, Rock Creek (tributary to the Clark Fork near Missoula), Blackfoot River, Thompson River, Lower Flathead River, and the Missouri River below Holter Dam.
- The concern is when the closure notices appear in the papers that the anglers really “hammer” the waters over the weekend.
- Close the Jefferson totally when it triggers at 280.

*Action: Mulligan moved and Colton seconded the motion to put closures on the rivers in Regions 2, 3, 4 and 5 brought before the Commissioners and to also delegate the closure of the rivers that are nearing the threshold (item b above) to the Commissioner of the region and the FWP Director. Motion carried.*

**2. Voluntary Hoot Owl Causing Confusion** – Mulligan indicated that the confusion arises between “voluntary hoot owl” on some rivers and “mandatory hoot owl” closures on others. He recommended to use “mandatory hoot owl” closures throughout the state.

*Action: Colton moved and Mulligan seconded the motion that the use of “mandatory hoot owl” closure be used throughout the state when closures were deemed necessary. Motion carried.*

Meeting adjourned at 11:08 a.m.

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**Steve Doherty, Chairman**

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**Susan Daly, Acting Director**